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Degrees granted for part-time study are minimal in Britain and have been mainly awarded by London University. A small amount of part-time degree work is also carried on by Goldsmiths' College, West Ham College of Technology, and the Universities of Manchester, Durham, and Belfast. The establishment of the National Council for Academic Awards has enabled many students to work for degrees at institutions without degree-awarding powers and part-time study has recently been incorporated into the programs. The demand for part-time study will increase with population growth, especially in the age range of 26 to 40, and with demands for higher qualifications among employees. The Open University is presently in process of creation but it is doubtful that this will satisfy the demand for higher qualifications. Part-time degree study should be provided at the great centers of urban population where a substantial program could be undertaken. (pt)

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FIRST DEGREES BY PART-TIME STUDY

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An Address to the Annual Conference of the
Universities Council for Adult Education (British)
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An Address to the Annual Conference of the Universities Council for Adult Education

Perhaps I ought to begin by reminding you of the origins of this item in our programme. Last year we were considering the question of diplomas and certificates in adult education. Afterwards I drew the attention of the Executive to the facts that the University of York had agreed in principle to institute degrees to be obtained by part-time study. Therefore the Executive decided that it was desirable to look at this question as well as that of diplomas and certificates.

London University:

When one approaches the question of degrees by part-time study perhaps the first thing to take into account is the position of Birkbeck College. If one reads American books about British adult education one often finds a description of Birkbeck but in Britain normally we never think of it as part of provision for adult education and very few books on British adult education published by British writers would discuss it at all except, perhaps, in its historical context. Recently, however, a Committee under Sir Eric Ashby has reported on the future of Birkbeck. Its Report has no hesitation in treating the College as one of the institutions of British adult education. Therefore in a sense, the Report on the Future of Birkbeck, which I regard as one of the most important

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documents on adult education to be published since the war, can be regarded as having helped to put the question of degrees by part-time study on the agenda of adult education. Provision of opportunity to take degrees by part-time study, in fact, is very largely a monopoly of London University. Everybody, when one thinks of students working part-time to obtain degrees, thinks of London External degrees. It is not the case though, of course, that all the students who work for London External degrees are part-time students. In fact the number of part-time students working for London External degrees must be rather less than half the total of registered External students. None-the-less the External degree, and the contribution of Birkbeck, taken together constitute the greatest contribution in this country of any university which gives opportunities to part-time students to work for degrees. There are other places in London where a certain amount of part-time degree work is undertaken, for example, in Goldsmiths' College, where students are working for External degrees of the University of London in Sociology and Psychology and Internal degrees in Music. In addition at the West Ham College of Technology for a long time students have worked for an Internal degree in Engineering and now a group of students is working for an External degree in Psychology.

Other Universities:

As I said, outside London the opportunities are few but they are perhaps more considerable than many people believe. The

University of Manchester in its Faculty of Economic and Social Studies, has been engaged in providing part-time degree courses since 1904. Originally the degree for which students worked was the B.A.(Admin.) but this is now confined to full-time students in Social Administration and the part-time students instead take a B.A. Ordinary degree in Economics. In recent years the number of students taking this degree has averaged eighteen. Belfast has a rather similar arrangement with a B.Sc. Pass degree in Economics. This has also been in operation for quite a considerable time. Last year thirty-two students graduated. The University of Durham also makes a considerable contribution with over three hundred students taking its Ordinary degree in Music. This is an External degree, the students register for it and the University makes no provision or arrangement in relation to the way in which they study. Therefore a considerable number may be studying part-time.

The National Council for Academic Awards:

A new development which has occurred in recent years is the establishment of the National Council for Academic Awards. There are a great many misapprehensions about this, both on the part of educationists and also on the part of students. The Council for National Academic Awards is a body which exists to provide opportunities for students, in institutions without degree awarding powers, to work for degrees. It is not the case,

however, that up to the present many part-time students have been enrolled for these degrees. This year for the first time the Council accepted a proposal for a part-time degree course. But in its Annual Report published a short time ago it recognises the need for part-time degree courses for mature students and says that special methods of teaching and special arrangements should be made in order to ensure the conditions under which these students work should be satisfactory.

North America and Australia:

The position in Britain contrasts very strongly with that in a number of other countries, particularly the United States, Canada and Australia. Before I refer to these, however, I may perhaps mention that the Report on the future of Birkbeck also draws attention to the position in the Soviet Union, where apparently the number of part-time students working for qualifications is increasing as a proportion of the total number of students. In the United States and Canada part-time degree courses, as is well known, are a considerable pre-occupation of the majority of universities. A Report by a special committee appointed by the President of McMaster University in Canada which was issued last year was a result of the fact that the President asked the Committee 'to construct a first class degree structure for part-time students'. What a revolution such a proposal would be if it was made by a Vice-Chancellor in this country! I know one American

University well and might perhaps describe the circumstances under which its part-time degree arrangements work. The Division which is really the Adult Education Division of this university provides part-time degree courses, has its own Senate, its own degrees and determines its own syllabuses. The number of students are measured in thousands and part-time degree work in fact constitutes the major part of the University level adult education work for which it is responsible. The position in Australia, which has been described in a recent report on part-time teaching in Australian universities, is comparable to the position in the United States with, roughly speaking, over thirty per cent of the students registered in Australian universities working for degrees by part-time study. Therefore we see that in a substantial part of the Anglo-Saxon world universities accept the idea that part-time study might be a necessary or satisfactory way for students to work for degrees.

The Question of Demand:

The major question which has to be answered when one begins to talk about degrees by part-time study is whether the demand for them in this country would justify the effort they involve. Many people will say that in fact sufficient opportunity is provided for the British system in full-time courses to meet all the needs of people who wish to obtain degrees. This, however, is an argument which it is very difficult to sustain. As we all know a large

number of students with the necessary basic admission qualifications are unable to obtain entrance into British universities every year. However this question of demand is a difficult one with which to deal because, of course, one cannot see that demand can be assessed independent of the opportunity to satisfy it. But quite a considerable amount of evidence exists which suggests that the kind of latent demand for study for degrees by part-time work is probably as great in this country as it was in the United States before the American universities started to provide the necessary opportunities. There has been a continuing growth in the number of students working for London External degrees. The Birkbeck Report says that it has been argued that if Birkbeck was more widely known in London the number of students applying for admission would greatly increase. The Birkbeck Report also says in its opinion the demand for part-time degree courses should be stimulated and colleges similar to Birkbeck should be started in other great urban centres of population in Britain. The position at Goldsmiths' College may be taken into account; there the Department of Adult Studies, its Adult Education Section, commenced degree work as recently as 1964 and already has registered working for degrees somewhere in the neighbourhood of 320 students. We might also take into account the fact that the age group (26-40) from which students for part-time degree courses are drawn will become an increased proportion of the population in the near future. Further there is a continuing and increasing demand from employers for people with qualifications which they can accept as reliable indications of a

sufficiently high standard of education. In the United States the support of employers for students taking part-time degrees has been a very important factor in increasing the volume of work of this kind which has been undertaken. As far as Britain is concerned I myself saw the Principal of a local evening institute in a small town very easily marshal twelve people who were qualified to take a London Sociology degree a short time ago and this Principal argues that even in centres of relatively small populations the demand for part-time degree courses is very considerable.

The Open University:

Discussing part-time degree courses, however, invariably brings to our attention the fact that the Open University is in course of creation. But it will be a very long time before it will be producing over a thousand graduates a year. The production of a thousand graduates a year is only a very modest performance on the part of a university. The University of Hull which at the best is only, under existing conditions, a medium-sized university, is at present producing 1,100 graduates a year. Personally I doubt very much whether the Open University can solve the problem of the demand for higher qualifications which exists widely among the population and is at the present time not satisfied. Further, although the idea of the open University has produced a new attitude of flexibility in relation to the idea of working for a degree, it remains the case that the best situation in which a student can find himself

is to be working in an institution in which the people who are teaching him are the people who set the examinations which determine whether his work has been satisfactory. Therefore I should say while the Open University should satisfy some of our requirements and may represent a very substantial step forward in the use of the new technology in relation to education there still remains a very strong case for encouraging traditional universities to offer part-time degrees as part of their provision for adult students.

Conclusion: The Needs of the Great Urban Centres.

In conclusion, perhaps I might say that the most important places where arrangements for part-time degree study need to be made is, as the Birkbeck Report suggests, our great centres of urban population, places like Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham, and perhaps not so much smaller cities such as, for example, Hull. In the smaller cities the effort would be more difficult and might fail and would represent a set-back to the idea of degrees by part-time study. If the effort is to be made it should be made in those places where the population is sufficient to produce a sufficient number of students to enable a substantial programme to be undertaken.

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